

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, California 92009
Phone: 760/431-9440
Fax: 760/431-9624

News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

(SD)

03-114

Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

For Release: December 18, 2003

DRAFT RECOVERY PLAN FOR OTAY TARPLANT NOW AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released a draft recovery plan for Otay tarplant (*Deinandra conjugens*), a native plant that occurs only in portions of San Diego County, California and Baja California, Mexico.

Public review and comment on the document is invited through 5:00 p.m. on March 2, 2004. Comments and materials related to the draft recovery plan should be submitted in writing to: Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92009. Comments and information may also be submitted by electronic mail to tarplant@fws.gov.

Otay tarplant was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1998. In December 2002 critical habitat was designated for Otay tarplant on approximately 6,330 acres of land in San Diego County.

The goal of the ESA is to recover listed species to the point where they are secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems and no longer need federal protection. A recovery plan is a blueprint providing guidance for actions by federal, state and other public agencies and private interests that will lead to the recovery and delisting of a species. Recovery plans are advisory only. They do not obligate the expenditure of funds or require that the recommended actions be implemented.

A member of the sunflower family, Otay tarplant ranges from 2 to 10 inches high and produces yellow flowers. The plant is self-incompatible which means an Otay tarplant can only be fertilized by pollen from another Otay tarplant if the two plants are genetically distinct from one another. Pollinating insects, and mammals and birds are very important to Otay tarplant pollination because they transport pollen between individual plants and, in the case of mammals and birds, aid in the dispersal of the plant's fruits and seeds.

The draft recovery plan outlines specific actions which, if successfully implemented, will enable the species to recover and ultimately be removed from Federal protection. For Otay tarplant to be considered for delisting several measurable criteria must be met, including: stabilize or increase populations of the plant and

its pollinators within established reserves; maintain the plant's genetic variation across its range; and ensure that no population of Otay tarplant experiences genetic loss or becomes threatened by inbreeding depression.

Specific actions that should be taken to help recover Otay tarplant include collecting seeds from wild plants that can be used to develop an implement a successful propagation program; permanently managing populations of Otay tarplant in areas targeted for conservation through the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) and its respective subarea plans; and monitoring reserve areas to ensure adequate populations of Otay tarplant pollinators are sustained.

At the time the plant was listed under the ESA about 25 populations of the Otay tarplant were documented, 24 of them in San Diego County and one in Baja California, Mexico. Since the 1998 listing of the plant, three new populations have been discovered, however, a number of the historical populations have been reduced, eliminated, or otherwise impacted by development.

Most of the remaining populations of Otay tarplant occur within the boundaries of the MSCP planning area and are anticipated to be conserved in designated reserve areas. Additionally, the MSCP includes some requirements for reserve area management designed to enhance conservation of Otay tarplant populations, however, the actions required by the MSCP may not be adequate to achieve full recovery of Otay tarplant.

The jurisdictions participating in the MSCP are not obligated to implement any additional actions for Otay tarplant recovery beyond what is required by the MSCP. Any further actions that may be necessary to recover Otay tarplant populations will be carried out by the Service or other cooperating entities.

For more information about Otay tarplant, including a photo of the plant, visit the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office's website at <http://carlsbad.fws.gov>. A copy of the draft Recovery Plan is available on the Internet at <http://pacific.fws.gov/ecoservices/endangered/recovery/default.htm>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

- FWS -

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://fws.gov>